

Lucy Anne by Genevie

Category: Stranger Things (TV 2016)

Genre: F/M

Language: English

Characters: Jim "Chief" Hopper, Joyce Byers

Relationships: Joyce Byers/Jim "Chief" Hopper

Status: Completed

Published: 2016-09-12

Updated: 2016-09-12

Packaged: 2022-04-01 20:35:00

Rating: Teen And Up Audiences

Warnings: No Archive Warnings Apply

Chapters: 1

Words: 1,739

Publisher: archiveofourown.org

Summary:

Hopper leaves Joyce standing in the doorway of her house, calling after him to come back. This is by no measure the reaction he wants to be having, but he can't bring himself to behave any differently. Maybe if Joyce ran after him—maybe if he felt her fingers tighten around his wrist, or heard her voice nearer to his ear, or saw up-close how much he's scaring her—he would remember that this is where he wants to be, and he wouldn't leave at all, but none of that happens.

Lucy Anne

Hopper leaves Joyce standing in the doorway of her house, calling after him to come back. This is by no measure the reaction he wants to be having, but he can't bring himself to behave any differently. Maybe if Joyce ran after him—maybe if he felt her fingers tighten around his wrist, or heard her voice nearer to his ear, or saw up-close how much he's scaring her—he would remember that this is where he wants to be, and he wouldn't leave at all, but none of that happens. She holds onto the door frame like it's the only thing keeping her standing, and he continues on his way to his blazer as though it's a magnet on a pole opposite to his own and its pull is irresistible.

Just before he drives away, he looks over his shoulder and sees that she's retreated inside the house. The tiny fact that she can't even watch him leave makes him feel worse, but he doesn't turn back. He won't be gone for long; he'll just be gone for now.

He hopes she realises that.



They meet almost a week later at the café near the movie theatre, but they don't stay for long; something about the smell of the coffee makes Joyce queasy. “On the bright side, it'll be easier to give up caffeine this time around,” she says. “It was chicken with Jonathan. Tomato sauce with Will. Pasta makes up half of what I cook so I'm glad I won't have to go through that again. Though it was nice trying out new foods, even if Lonnie hated most of it.”

“Joyce.”

“I can't remember what it was called, but there was this wrap type of thing that I really liked and I wish I'd written the recipe down.”

“Joyce.”

“I think I got it from a cooking segment on one of those breakfast shows. Maybe Good Morning America? Anyway, I kept putting it off and, now... I wonder if they have it on file somewhere. Do you think

they might?"

"I don't know, but my ear is about five more words from falling off."

"What?"

"You're rambling."

"Ack, sorry, I'm just..."

"Nervous?"

"Relieved," she says, looking at him from the corner of her eye. "I was worried that you might have bolted."

"I thought about it."

She misses a step beside him, and the stumbling scrape of her shoe against the sidewalk is such a hideously simple expression of pain that it's like nails on the chalkboard. It shivers up his spine.

"Oh."

"After Sarah, I swore to myself, that was it. I wasn't going to put myself into a position where I could feel that kind of pain again."

"And now?"

He knows what she's hoping he'll say; that knowing there's a new heart beating in her belly has caused his long-quieted paternal urges to begin to beat again, renewed; that he wants this baby in the absolute way that his lungs want air; that he is certain he still has it in him to be a father. But Hopper is not a dishonest man. Not a single part of him is willing to lie to her, even knowing what it will mean to let her down.

He is, however, avoidant, evasive. "I don't want to lose what we have, Joyce," he says.

It doesn't work; he should have known it wouldn't. Joyce's worries have to be treated with precisely the right salve. Anything else just seeps into them, multiplying through them like bacteria, eating away

at her nerves until every last one of them is frayed, barely held together. “Dammit, Hop,” she says, searching her bag for her Camels before remembering that she shouldn’t smoke, then tossing her arms up in the air, instead. “You know that’s not what I’m asking.”

“I know.”

“I’ve done this twice before with one man who didn’t want to be a father. I don’t want to do it a third time.”

“I know.”

“You know what, let’s just call it a day,” she says.

It’s all very friendly, their return to Hopper’s blazer, their drive back to the Byers house, but that friendliness exists on the far edge of normal. Joyce is frenetic in conversation, talking to him about things of no consequence—high school sports, the movies, the weather—like she’ll self-destruct if she stops. For the most part, Hopper just sits there and listens.

When they pull up to her house, she falls silent mid-sentence. “Are you all right?” he asks, and though the tired sadness dulling her eyes like sea glass is blatantly clear, he accepts her, “Oh yeah, I’m fine,” as if it’s the truth.



They are friends: this doesn’t change. If he’s being honest with himself, they weren’t really romantic partners to begin with. He didn’t sweep her off her feet; she didn’t take his breath away. What they were is pair of people who simply fit together, interlocked in the natural way of two pieces from the same puzzle.

He won’t get to feel the warmth of her breath against his skin anymore, though, or play his fingers and his tongue across her bare flesh, coaxing out her moans until they’re deep and throaty. He won’t rock in sync with her until it feels like the entire world is moving alongside them. He won’t pass by the jewellery store and think, *maybe one day*.

Or rather, he’ll lose those things if he lets them slip away. He doesn’t

want to do that.

Joyce is, to him, one in one hundred.

She's the mother whose child was taken by outside forces; the rare woman, at least these days, who Hopper can't picture himself ever just fucking; the old flame that can still burn with the warmth of a hearth even after spending nearly twenty years in cinders.

Now they're each one half of a pair of people whose birth control fell just south of its promised 99%+ reliability, and Hopper feels like he should have expected this. Even in high school, Joyce wasn't the safe choice; with a family like hers—with a life like hers—she was a sparkler, a live wire, a conduit for trouble outside of her influence.

He thinks that he has had enough trouble to last him until he's nothing but ash scattered over Sarah's grave. But he knows, oh how he knows, that he hasn't had even close to 1% of his fill of her.



He kisses her in the front seat of his blazer.

Jonathan has the Byers' car, and Joyce needs a ride home from work. Her skin is flushed from the heat, and her eyes are drooping like they always are after a long shift, and she drapes herself over the passengers seat, exhausted and sore. All he can think about is how much he's reminded of how she looked sprawled out across his bed, her hair a mess and her lips still parted, her breaths coming out in soft, ragged pants.

It isn't a passionate kiss, too tentative and unsure for that. But she matches the rhythm of his lips, and when he leans further into her, she takes his hand and rests it on the curve of her belly in a gesture more intimate than he expects.

He pulls away from the kiss.

Their baby is moving.

It's soft, at first, the feeling of motion beneath his palm, but it quickly rises in intensity. He thinks he feels a foot, or a hand, or a knee, and

he tightens his hand around around it, just a little, until it withdraws. Joyce raises herself up to kiss the top of his head. He can feel her lips curl up into a smile before she lifts them away.

“He's strong,” Hopper says.

“Or she. This is nothing, by the way. You should feel it first thing in the morning. Some days I swear I wonder if the baby'll ever tucker itself out.”

There's a burn at the edges of his eyes, a tightness in his throat, a heat roiling in his stomach. Something in him blooms like a morning glory widening in the light of a young day, and he thinks, *this feels right*.

It stops being about him. About the way that Sarah's death still hits him with bursts of all-consuming pain. About his building fear that each of the baby's kicks will be its last. About his surety that he won't survive losing another child. It becomes about Joyce, and about the tiny baby whose hand-or-foot-or-knee he had felt in his cupped hand. He looks at her now and he doesn't think, *if only she hadn't got pregnant*, anymore.

“Lonnie,” she says, but she stops herself, shaking her head, tightening her smile.

“Lonnie what?”

“He never did... that. What you're doing. It freaked him out. He thought it was weird. You know, Hop, if you still... if you don't want... this, then that's fine, I understand, I do, but I can't... you can't... You need to move your hand. If you want out.”

He thinks about it. He does. He has to; he wants to be all-in or not in at all.

In the end, he keeps his hand where it is, right on her belly. Right above their baby.



They name her Lucy, after Lucy Maud Montgomery.

“Sarah loved Anne of Green Gables,” Hopper had said. “She made her mother and I promise that if she ever had a sister, we'd name her Lucy Anne. What do you think?” And Joyce placed a kiss on their little girl's nose and said, “welcome to the world, Lucy Anne Hopper.”

There isn't really enough room on the hospital bed for him, but he squeezes in beside Joyce anyway. When she hands him their daughter, the weight of her in his arms lifts a weight off his shoulders. He holds his ear to her chest, listening to her heartbeat, calming himself through the steadiness of her breathing, the warmth of her skin.

Joyce rests her head on his shoulder, looking up at him. “You okay?”

He misses Sarah. He is terrified of how small and fragile Lucy feels in his arms. He worries that his years of self-imposed isolation have made him less fit to be a parent. But he doesn't put any of those things to words.

“She's perfect,” he says. And in this moment, at least, that's the only thing that matters.